

Training Jumpstarts Early Literacy Services

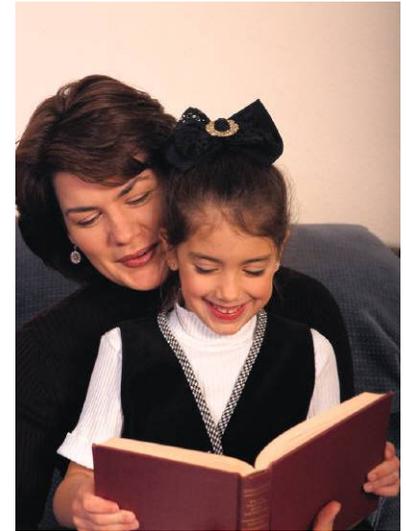
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By M. Claire Williamson

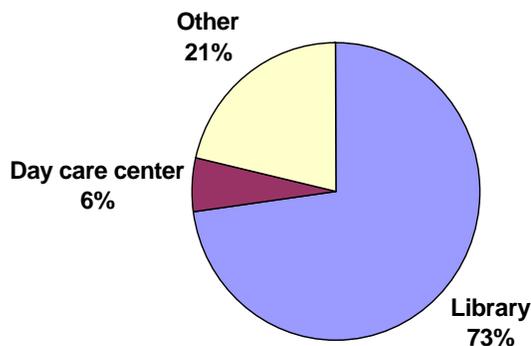
During Fall 2004 and early Winter 2005, the Colorado State Library, with the involvement of key library leaders, initiated a statewide effort to help libraries improve their services in early literacy. The project was based on the Every Child Ready to Read @your library campaign, an early childhood initiative of the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children.

As part of this project, seven early literacy workshops were held across the state. They covered current research on early literacy development and presented examples of the development of the six early literacy skills. The workshops were conducted by Renea Arnold, Early Childhood Resources Coordinator, Multnomah County Public Library, Oregon, and Bonnie McCune, Library Community Programs Consultant, Colorado State Library. Approximately 125 individuals received the training.



At the conclusion of each workshop, participants were asked to complete an evaluation of the event. Eighty-eight evaluations were returned and the results are presented here.

Chart 1
Question 1: Where Do You Work?



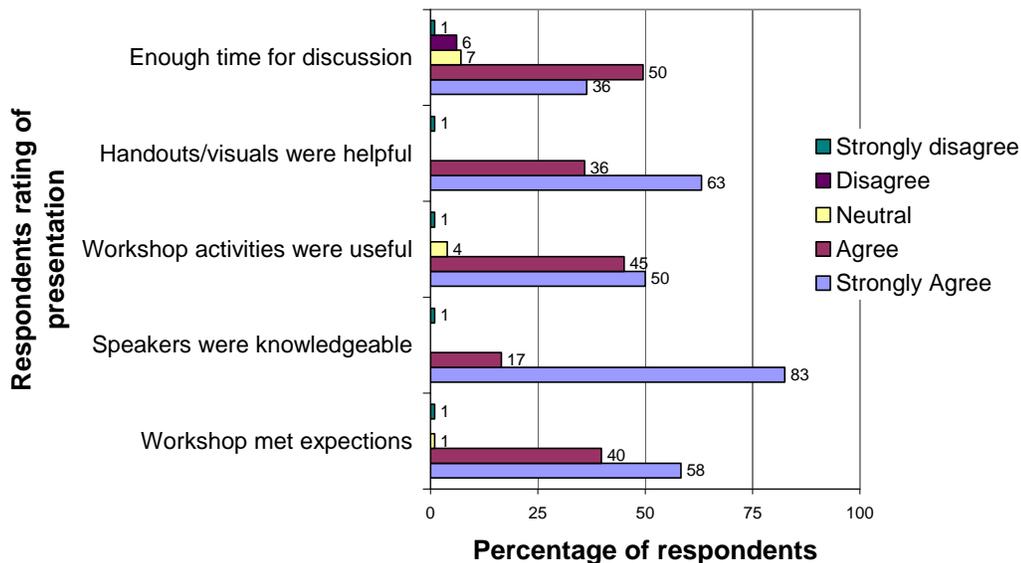
Participants in the workshops were first asked to identify whether they were working in a library, day care center, or other place. (See Chart 1).

- Nearly 3 out of 4 respondents (73%) worked in a library.
- Less than 1 in 10 respondents (6%) worked in a day care center.
- Almost 1 in 4 respondents (21%) worked in another location.

Of respondents who marked “other” for their place of work, many indicated that they were providing day care in their homes, as opposed to a day care center.



Chart 2
Question 2: To What Extent Do You Agree/Disagree with the Following Statements?



Workshop Satisfaction

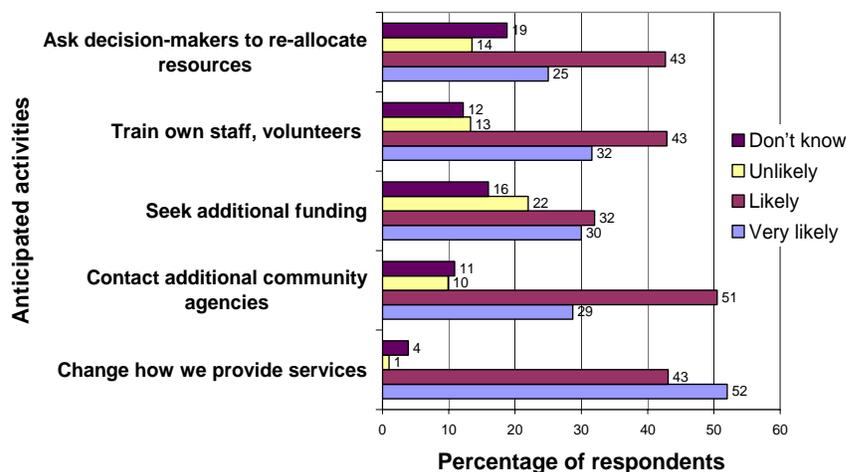
Participants were asked to respond to five statements about their satisfaction with the workshop by rating the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. (See Chart 2).

- An overwhelming percentage of respondents strongly agreed (58%) or agreed (40%) that the workshop met their expectations.
- Nearly all respondents (99%) strongly agreed or agreed that the speakers were knowledgeable and that the handouts/visuals were helpful.
- Respondents strongly agreed (50%) or agreed (45%) that the workshop activities were useful.

Although most respondents felt that there had been enough time for discussion during the workshops, a small percentage (7%) would have preferred more time.



Chart 3
Question 3: How Likely is it That You Will Pursue the Following Activities?



Anticipated Outcomes

Participants were asked five questions regarding how likely it was that they would pursue certain activities after completing the workshop.

- As a result of the workshop, overwhelmingly, respondents indicated that they would very likely (52%) or likely (43%) change how they provide existing services to better address early literacy.
- Eight in ten respondents (80%) said they were very likely or likely to contact additional community agencies about partnering to better address early literacy.
- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) said they would very likely or likely seek additional funding to support early literacy activities and over two-thirds (68%) said they would ask decision-makers to re-allocate resources in order to better address early literacy.
- Three-fourths of respondents (75%) said they would very likely or likely train their own staff and volunteers to better address early literacy.

“What an extraordinary workshop for all persons connected with young children. This workshop is of primary importance to all of us who do not have an education background. Renea explained so much that we can use as a jumping off place to further our knowledge of how children learn. Thank you.”

-library respondent

Conclusion

The early literacy workshops were well-received by those in attendance. In describing the workshops, comments such as “very well organized,” “practical and informative,” and “very knowledgeable speaker,” were typical responses.

The workshops were intended to encourage improvement in library services in early literacy. The number and quality of the responses to the question, “What was the most important thing you learned?,” suggest that respondents not only learned a great deal from the workshops, but that they were able to immediately envision how to apply what they learned to their current work situations.

The survey results also suggest that respondents were encouraged by the workshops to such an extent that they anticipate making a number of significant changes in how they provide their existing services to better address early literacy.

What Did Respondents Learn From the Workshop?

Respondents were asked to identify the most important thing they learned at the workshop. Seventy-five respondents provided written responses to this question. The selected comments that follow are indicative of what respondents reported they learned:

- Reinforced the importance of oral language (stories, spoken, etc.) for literacy foundation.
- I can implement many of these techniques in my story time to teach these six skills, and it was nice to realize I do a lot of these.
- The nicely-organized, “prepackaged” material that pulls together stuff we knew and do.
- Although the 6 skills begin at birth, it was helpful to hear that addressing letter knowledge at our story time for babies is developmentally appropriate.
- The brain development info. How easy it is to incorporate this into what we are already doing.
- Good reading habits at an early age will make a more successful, well-rounded adult.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

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